

REMARKS

In response to the Office Action mailed November 28, 2006, the Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner enter the above amendments and consider the following remarks. Claims 1-3 and 5-14 have been amended, and claims 21-25 have been canceled without prejudice. In addition, new claim 26 has been added. As a result, claims 1-20 and 26 are pending in the application. The Applicant respectfully requests further examination and reconsideration of the application in light of the amendments and accompanying remarks.

Rejection of Claims 1-16 and 18-25 Under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

The Examiner rejected claims 1-16 and 18-25 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being obvious over Manning et al. in view of Bynoe. The Applicant respectfully traverses the rejection and maintains the remarks that were previously set forth. The Applicant respectfully submits that the previous amendment did not include a piecemeal analysis of the cited references as asserted by the Examiner. Much to the contrary, the references were addressed to show that they do not provide the necessary motivation to combine them as suggested by the Examiner.

The Applicant has also amended claim 1 to more clearly describe an exemplary embodiment of the invention. The cited references fail to teach or suggest a paneling unit in which a rear surface of a backing portion has a plurality of drainage grooves. The Applicant has amended claim 1 to clarify this distinction. Therefore, the Applicant respectfully submits that the cited references cannot support this rejection.

The Applicant has also made other amendments to claim 1 in order to broaden its coverage in certain areas. In particular, the Applicant has removed the mention of an attachment strip, a channel, and at least one connector groove in order to broaden the claim. It should be understood that such amendments were not made in order to distinguish the claimed invention over the cited references.

Rejection of Claim 17 Under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

The Examiner rejected claim 17 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being obvious over Manning et al. in view of Bynoe and further in view of Phillips et al. The Applicant respectfully traverses the rejection and maintains the remarks that have been previously set forth.

The shortcomings of Manning et al. in view of Bynoe with regard to claim 1 have been set forth above. Phillips et al. fails to overcome those shortcomings with regard to claim 1. Therefore, the Applicant respectfully submits that Manning et al. in view of Bynoe and further in view of Phillips et al. cannot support the rejection of claim 17 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a).

Conclusion

The Applicant has distinguished claims 1-20 and 26 over the cited references. Therefore, the Applicant respectfully submits that the present application is now in condition for allowance, and such action is earnestly requested.

Respectfully submitted,

Date: January 22, 2007

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